

The John Drake House  
Main Street  
Chester, Morris County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-647

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NJ  
14-CHEST  
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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The John Drake House  
Main Street\*  
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Owner: Chester P. Apgar (William Smith, occupant)

Date of Erection: 1830-1840

Architect: Unknown

Builder: John Drake (original owner)

Present Condition: Original, well preserved

Number of Stories: Two and one-half, cellar and garret

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry

Exterior walls - timber frame, clapboarded

Interior walls - lath and plaster on studding

Chimneys - brick built into inside of gable  
end walls

Roof - gable, metal covered, no dormers

Historical Data:

The identification of the owner of the lot at the time this house was erected (a time indicated by its design and details) is possible by a search of title in the land and probate records of the County reported as follows:

By deed of 2 January 1827, Jacob Drake Jr. and wife Phebe of Morris Township conveyed to John Drake, of same place, for \$800 an 8-acre lot in

\*Houses in the borough of Chester are without numbers.

The one here surveyed stands on the south side of Main Street, between Academy and Church Streets.

Chester Township, describing its lines as Beginning at a stump for a corner to lands of Jared Norris, thence north 40 degrees east 5 chains to the old road leading from Morristown to Easton, thence down the same south 75 degrees east 4 chains, thence north 21 degrees east 7.35 chains to the turnpike road, thence along the same south 78 degrees west 15.50 chains, thence south 40 degrees 9.50 to the place of beginning. This describes the lot in the borough of Chester on which stands now the house here surveyed, and shows that in 1827 it extended along the south side of the turnpike (Main Street) to the junction of the "old road" and included the triangular plot across that road.

John Drake and wife Mary, of Morris Township\* (he having built the house on the lot in the village of Chester purchased in 1827 as abovesaid) sold the house and 4 acres off the east end of that lot by their deed of 12 May 1851 to Daniel Skillenger of Springfield, Essex County, for \$1400.

This grantee held the property until 6 April 1853, in which date he with wife Hannah, being then of Morris Township (and so not occupying the house) sold the same property to Benjamin Van Duser excepting the store house standing on the premises. The map of the village of Chester published in Beer's Atlas of Morris County, 1868, shows this house marked "B. Van Duser," and the store west of it at the street corner.

On 1st April 1876 the property was sold by the estate of Benjamin Van Dusen deceased to John W. Van Arsdale of Chester for \$3475. On 15 September 1905 Alfred Brown and wife Laura and others, of Chester, New Jersey, passed title to John Van Arsdale of same place, describing the property as "that lot or tract of land and premises owned and occupied by the late Benjamin Van Dusen deceased during his lifetime".

Finally, by deed of 26 February 1926, the administrator of the estate conveyed the property to Chester P. Apgar of Chester, for \$4550, as being 3.6

acres remaining. Mr. Apgar is the owner at the date of our survey of the house in March 1940.

Bibliography:

A search of title in Land and Probate records of Morris County by James P. Richards Jr. and Thomas J. Riley, abstractors

Lewis D. Cook  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams  
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer

TRW 10/2/40